

Supporting information

Support a colleague

There isn't "the answer" to each of the cards. Players' experience, culture at work, management style and personal characteristics will all have a bearing on how they would respond.

Here is an idea or two for each card to provoke thought and reflection.



Content	Comments
<p><u>1. Personal insults</u></p> <p>"How do you cope? Every day customers disrespect us, treat us like dirt and throw personal insults at us! How do you cope and manage to stay calm?"</p> <p>As Carrie's mentor, how might you reply to her?</p>	<p>Carrie's colleague is making a plea for help. We don't know if it's just a bad day or something that's been building.</p> <p>This is a perfect opportunity for players sound off a little. More importantly to share what they do, how they think (mindset) and how they respond when caller behaviour affects them.</p> <p>Once done, summarise the ideal mindset needed for success.</p>
<p><u>2. Monotony?</u></p> <p>Three months on from her Induction training Manira confides, "It doesn't feel worth it. It's just so monotonous. It's the same s***t every day."</p> <p>How might you support Manira?</p>	<p>Manira is reacting to the perceived life of a Contact Centre Agent. Every job has monotonous elements to it.</p> <p>How would you connect Manira to the worth of what she does?</p> <p>This could be mindset too. You'll approach your role very differently when you believe every call is an opportunity to refine a skill, to try out a new approach or focus on an area of call practice. It's now 100% varied.</p> <p>Mary Poppins was right when she said in every job that must be done there is an element of fun. Find the fun and "snap!" the job's a game.</p> <p>Perhaps you can remind your players of options to get time away from the phone.</p>
<p><u>3. Physical demands</u></p> <p>Jake's confided that he has headaches, sleeplessness and back pain. He says, "It's the constant screen use and being sat down for hours at a time".</p> <p>How might you help Jake?</p>	<p>Firstly, Jake needs thanked for raising it.</p> <p>It's known that the repetitive nature of tasks and the usual requirement to remain seated can be physically demanding. However, it's not about admitting liability. You probably have a health and safety protocol and/or assessment to follow.</p> <p>Jake's symptoms could be from outside work too.</p> <p>Draw out practical actions to mitigate and remove any work underlying causes such as posture, breaks, hydration, stretching.</p> <p>Pull together players' knowledge about all the things in your organisation that helps avoid such issues for Jake and everyone else.</p>

Content	Comments
<p><u>4. Manager, manager, manager</u></p> <p>Olivia is struggling. She seems to crumble when callers demand to speak with her manager.</p> <p>What might you do to help her?</p>	<p>This is a common tactic by callers. Some may believe they can either pressure the agents to make concessions or get them from a “higher up”.</p> <p>If Olivia sees it as important to please others, she may feel caught between, knowing she is best to solve the caller’s issue and disobeying the caller’s request and even a drive in the team not to transfer callers to managers if at all possible.</p> <p>This is a perfect opportunity for players to share practice of what they do and say.</p>
<p><u>5. Agent liar</u></p> <p>Every time Stef takes a client’s details, the team hear her say, “Really! That’s my birthday too.” Stef says it helps rapport on the way to success.</p> <p>As Stef’s work friend, how might you approach speaking to her about lying to clients?</p>	<p>This maybe indirectly related to resilience. Behaving authentically ought to be important in every role. Lying to callers probably also conflicts with the values at Stef’s organisation.</p> <p>Therefore, while this behaviour is easy to laugh off, it goes much deeper than the obvious presenting symptom of lying to clients.</p> <p>For example what lying might:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be doing to Stef herself • Mean long term to her and her work relationships • Say to other agents if it’s not addressed • Mean when a client finds out.
<p><u>6. Lack of recognition</u></p> <p>At break, Josh tells you he’s demoralised with the lack of recognition. “Last week, I did lots of overtime, had my best stats since starting here and not a word from my manager.”</p> <p>How might you respond to Josh?</p>	<p>Like many roles, Josh is contrasting the lack of recognition with what happens when he makes one mistake.</p> <p>Without knowing Josh well we have to consider different options.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use self-motivation with Josh. Set his own targets with rewards when he achieves them • Supporting him to approach his manager about his feedback needs
<p><u>7. Just want to chat</u></p> <p>Sophie indulges callers who just want to chat. The result is her stats are down. Sophie doesn’t want to be rude. She’s convinced it’s providing a great service by just being there for people.</p> <p>How might you coach her?</p>	<p>The tension between providing a personalised service and management by data is as real as it gets in many Contact Centres.</p> <p>Often, a type of caller just wants to chat with another human being. Maybe they have learning difficulties, maybe lonely or callers who want to talk about their hard times and so on.</p> <p>The challenge ending such calls can be a stressor especially if you think too much about the caller’s circumstances.</p> <p>So coaching Sophie could be around asking her how she could bring these calls to a close without being rude.</p>
<p><u>8. Hang up: Put down</u></p> <p>You’ve noticed that each time Greig closes a tough call he swears pretty loudly.</p> <p>You challenged him and he responded, “It’s how I</p>	<p>This is about acknowledging the need to release after a tough call and explore other ways.</p> <p>Greig stated it’s how it keeps him resilient. If we accept this at face value the conversation ought to move on to how his current approach may be affecting others around him, how it likely conflicts with the organisation’s values, behaviours, customer charter and so on.</p>

Content	Comments
<p>let off steam. It keeps me resilient.”</p> <p>How might you proceed with Greig?</p>	<p>Finally ask about other options he has to achieve the same result.</p>
<p><u>9. Caffeine overload</u></p> <p>Marta is on her first day out of induction training.</p> <p>As she sits down in her new team, she produces two energy drinks, high in sugar and caffeine. They're plonked on her desk. She announces, "That'll get me through the morning".</p> <p>As her mentor, what might you say to her?</p>	<p>This should provoke a discussion among players about what's best to maintain energy and wellbeing.</p> <p>Ask your players if Marta has another two drinks in the afternoon would you, as a colleague; talk with her about it to make sure she knew the risks?</p> <p>https://www.safetysideideas.com/safetytalks/energy-drink-dangers/</p> <p>https://www.nccih.nih.gov/health/energy-drinks</p>
<p><u>10. Nothing is working</u></p> <p>Kyle's had six similar calls today, all for the same campaign. Each client was unhappy with a new process. Regardless of how Kyle explained it, nothing worked.</p> <p>Kyle's declares he's had enough. He even mentioned quitting and going back to college.</p> <p>How might you counsel him?</p>	<p>Acknowledging Kyle's feelings is the first important action.</p> <p>Next explore his current explanations, what did he say, what devices did he use (such as an analogy that compared the process to something else), what wording did he use?</p> <p>What specifically were the clients unhappy about: all different things or the same things?</p> <p>How has he heard other agents deal with their challenges?</p> <p>What might be another approach to use?</p>
<p><u>11. Personal: professional</u></p> <p>Aaron is in the break out area frustrated, angry and upset. A series of clients called him, 'incompetent', 'a robot', and a 'moron'. The more he talks the clearer it is that he's taking things personally.</p> <p>What might you say and do with Aaron?</p>	<p>There's a balance to find between taking things personally and professionally.</p> <p>Although it often sounds like it, the callers don't mean it personally - they are usually shouting at the business not you the person. After all, they don't know you.</p> <p>Any conversation that creates upset needs some professional reflection. What could I have said, done, behaved, sounded, etc. that contributed to the callers' outbursts. What can I learn and apply to the future so that I am even better at what I do.</p> <p>It can be helpful to think about having a force field. You let enough through to reflect and improve but the rest bounces off because it's not really directed at you.</p>
<p><u>12. Role conflict</u></p> <p>Amanda's struggling with conflicting messages about her role. On the one hand, there's pressure on call duration, response time</p>	<p>This is a common dilemma for team members. Supporting Amanda could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping her speak with her team leader about the current shape of her stats. Are they ok or which ones need improved. • Helping Amanda review her calls to spot opportunities to deliver great service quicker, use different control tools,

Content	Comments
and waiting time. On the other, it's to improve customer satisfaction. She's stressed. What might you do to support her?	manage the calls better, greater use of language to influence, matching language patterns to improve rapport and so customer satisfaction and so on.
<u>13. The interrupter</u> You can see that TJ's frustrated. When the call ends TJ says, "I just can't deal with them when they keep interrupting me. It drives me mad! As TJ's colleague, what might you do?	Interrupting comes from many sources. TJ shows a fixed mindset with the "I just can't deal with them" comment. Plus referring to customers as "Them" may raise alarm bells. Maybe TJ is exaggerating and it's more of a one off. As a colleague you might: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share tactics for interrupters • Listen to some of TJ's interrupter calls to look for improvements • Have TJ note callers identified as the 'keeps interrupting' ones and have TJ review them • Talk to TJ about fixed and growth mindset to see if TJ identifies with one or the other.
<u>14. Induction overwhelm</u> Kim performed well on each job task during the induction nursery. After a day in the business she's told you she is overwhelmed using all the systems and processes at the same time. Advise Kim what she might do next.	This can happen when people leave the induction and enter the real world. It's where you bring all the systems and processes together with real customers over extended periods. That can phase some people. Problem-solve 'overwhelmed' with Kim to get to specifics. Once identified, prioritise and then action plan. Check in with Kim often then wean her off as her confidence improves.
<u>15. Big brother: big stress</u> Three times this week, Marc's complained about the 'brutal' use of stats and data. He feels like a drone, a 'non-person' with no control over his day. How might you help Marc?	Marc is responding to the data driven environment of many contact centres. This can be amplified if Marc's team leader is 'data first: people second' and not 'people first: data second'. Regardless you can help Marc: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get some proportion: there are management stats in every job • How can he flip the use of stats and data to benefit him and not get him down • Does he really have 'no control'? Explore this with him • Support him to talk with his team leader.
<u>16. Threat of violence</u> Amira just closed a call. She looks visibly shaken up. It turns out the caller threatened to come to the office and beat her up.	Personal threats do happen. Hopefully, it's just a caller letting off steam and there is no substance to it. Confirm to Amira what the company procedure or protocol is for such situations. Have her action it. Talk (mostly listen) to Amira so she can talk through the experience and her feelings. Speaking about it will help Amira move on.

Content	Comments
How might you advise Amira?	Listen to the call to review how it got to that level of emotion and what Amira could do differently next time.
<p><u>17. The talk downer</u></p> <p>“ARRGGHH” was Natalie’s blow out 10-minutes before a shift end. She barked so everyone could hear, “I totally hate it when customers talk down to me! I’m not their ‘love’, ‘girl’, ‘pet’. I’ve had about as much as I can take!”</p> <p>What might you say to Natalie on your commute home?</p>	<p>This end of shift ‘fraying at the edges of our normal calmness’ is natural. It’s possible this has been building over more than one shift and now it’s time for Natalie to ‘cash-in’ her frustration.</p> <p>Share approaches to releasing such tensions at work.</p> <p>Acknowledge people who call can have dated approaches to their communications.</p> <p>Share tactics for having callers use Natalie’s name throughout. Such as Natalie telling the caller at the start to “Call me Natalie”.</p>
<p><u>18. Build up</u></p> <p>Kazim looks ever more down. He tries to shrug you off with, “I’m struggling a bit right now. I’ve lost my mojo.”</p> <p>How might you coach Kazim through this?</p>	<p>There’s nothing specific here just a build-up resulting in Kazim’s lost mojo.</p> <p>Ask him if he were to guess what might possibly be at the root of his mojo loss. Then ask what else? Keep going until you get them all.</p> <p>Then prioritise. Next, ask Kazim what might be a quick win. Then what, if improved, would have the biggest impact on his mojo.</p> <p>After that, it is simply action planning with review date(s) and finally making sure Kazim is committed to his plan.</p>

End